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26 September 1967

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT: Possible Moves on the Negotiating Track**

1. "Pennsylvania," as you may be aware, is a series of probes following up the Kissinger approach in Paris. Our last response from Hanoi was received on Sunday, 24 September. I have not seen the response but Mr. Nitze, who has, described it as "slightly plaintive" but not particularly helpful. The North Vietnamese apparently are still insisting on a suspension of the bombing to clear the atmosphere without promising anything in return.

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3. The "Tcherniakov" and Joseph Kraft comment, plus a few other hints, suggest that the Russians are now floating the line that negotiations should involve talks between Saigon and the NLF, since Hanoi would lose too much face in the world Communist movement if it took part as a direct participant. Such a proposal is tempting bait, but accepting it would undercut our major political principle, i. e., that the NLF is not an independent political entity but, instead, is Hanoi's agent.

4. For our Communist adversaries, the optimum negotiating scenario would be one involving a direct talk between the U.S. Government

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and the NLF. This, the Communists must recognize is not likely to happen. Their best politically feasible scenario is the one proposed by "Tcherniakov": Saigon NLF talks in which Hanoi plays only the role of an interested observer but not a participant.

5. Although the North Vietnamese would probably welcome negotiations for which we paid a considerable price (e.g., cessation of the bombing and, if possible, of offensive action in South Vietnam) in which they could use to gain a respite from Allied pressure, Hanoi is unlikely to enter into meaningful, productive talks before they see the results of the November 1968 U.S. elections.

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